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H. COURTHOPE BOWEN

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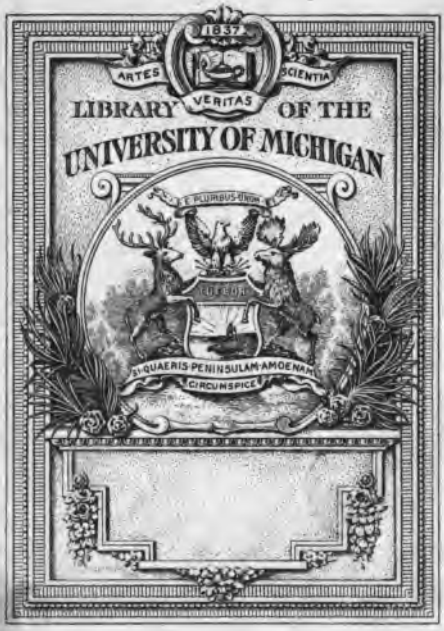

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TWO LECTURES WITH EXAMPLES

BY

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ON THE TEACHING OF ENGLISH LITERATURE IN MIDDLE-CLASS SCHOOLS[1]

If we were to inquire, in any hundred English schools taken at random, whether *Literature* formed a part of the regular school course, I think we should get positive, very positive, answers in the affirmative from at least ninety-nine. And yet I am prepared to maintain that at least ninety-eight of the ninety-nine answers would be wrong. There are hardly any schools in England, in which Literature, *used as literature*, forms any part of the regular education. Works in many languages, by many famous writers—in Latin, in Greek, in French, in German, and frequently in English—are indeed employed in almost every school above the rank of an infant school. But employed how? As lay-figures for lessons in vocabulary, in construction, in philology, in antiquarianism, and all the rest of old Dryasdust's pet subjects; but as lessons in thought and imagination, in the art of expression, in the beauty and power of speech, never, or very nearly never. I am very far from wishing to be thought to deny that

[1] A Paper read before the College of Preceptors on March 16th 1881, and since revised.

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the lessons usually given on Latin and Greek authors and the rest, are of use. I would even allow that they are of great use. But what I assert is, that they are not lessons on *Literature*.

What then, I shall be asked, *are* lessons on Literature? and what good do you think them likely to do? To answer these questions, with a special view to the use of English Literature in non-classical schools, is the object of my present attempt.

By the study of Literature, as *literature*, I mean the study of a poem or prose-work for the sake of its substance, its form and its style; for the sake of the thought and imagination and feeling it contains, and the methods used to express these; for the sake of its lofty, large or acute perception of things; its power of exposition; the beauty, force, and meaning of its metaphors, its similes, and its epithets; the strength and music of its language. All of which things have nothing to do with grammar, and but very little to do with philology or antiquarianism.[1] In fact, my aim is to lead my pupils to appreciate thought as thought, a work of art as a work of art; and thereby not only to

[1] As an illustration of an utterly wrong use of antiquarianism, I would refer my readers to, amongst other books, the Clarendon Press edition of *As You Like It*. At the beginning of the second act occur the lines—

"Which like the toad, ugly and venomous,
Wears yet a precious jewel in his head."

Instead of a short statement that this was an old fancy, with perhaps a couple of fairly familiar quotations referring to it, we have a long note—about a page and a half of very small print—relating the origin and history of the fable, with learned quotations from obscure authors whom few people have ever heard of.

As an instance of intrusive grammar, I might mention that, in the

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enlarge, enrich, and refine their minds and hearts, but also to bring them to a knowledge and ability of expressing themselves, when they have something to say, both correctly and well. The study of grammar and philology and antiquarianism will help them but little to accomplish this object. If they are to become good writers or good speakers, they must study the works or speech of those who have written or spoken well. If authorities are needed in support of this view I appeal to Pliny and Cicero, Cardinal Wolsey, Roger Ascham, Milton, Montaigne, Locke, Rousseau, and many another.

In dealing with a foreign language, it is of course necessary that our pupils should attain a fair knowledge of its vocabulary and construction before anything like a genuine appreciation of its literature can in any sense be possible for them; and all attempts at producing this appreciation have therefore to be postponed to a rather late period of their school life. But I think the period need not by any means be made so late as it generally is. And to omit it altogether is, I consider, a still more serious fault. We ourselves know, by our own experience, that it is not at all necessary for us to be deeply versed in all the *irregularities* of French or German, before we can enjoy our Molière and Hugo, or our Schiller and Goethe;

notes to so simple a poem as *The Burial of Sir John Moore*, one editor commences with—"*Not*, an adverb qualifying '*a*,' usually called the indefinite article, but really an adjective, a contracted form of the numeral adjective *one*." While another, in explaining the meaning of *fallow* to little boys, gives its Anglo-Saxon derivation. In the last case, I am afraid I must admit that I was the culprit myself—but that was ten years ago, and I was a little crazy on the subject of philology. I have grown wiser since then.

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and why any one should suppose this to be so in the case of Latin and Greek, I am quite at a loss to understand. A good sound knowledge of the *regularities* of a language seems to me a quite sufficient introduction to its literature; while the *irregularities* may very safely be left to be dealt with as they occur.

In Middle-Class Schools our pupils generally leave us at the age of fourteen or fifteen, only a very few staying on till they are sixteen years of age; in these schools, therefore, it is vain to hope to do much with the literatures of foreign languages. But this does not compel us to give up the study of Literature altogether. We have still our own native English to fall back upon; and its literature will, I think, be found quite sufficient for our purpose. Here we have no difficulties to encounter in the regular constructions, for our pupils are well acquainted with these already; and the difficulty of vocabulary is only a very small matter, and may be reduced to next to nothing, if we are careful in our choice of subjects. We can therefore commence the study of English Literature at a comparatively early period; and I have found great advantage in so doing.

But perhaps I shall make my views clearer on this subject, if I take a short and simple poem, and treat it in the way I propose. I must ask you to bear in mind, that I am not to be supposed to be addressing myself to grave and learned ladies and gentlemen, but to little children of ten or eleven years of age, whose homes are not for the most part filled with an atmosphere of culture and learning; and whose home literature in all probability mainly consists of nothing better than

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the daily newspaper. Moreover, as my time is short, I am choosing the very simplest of simple poems, and must ask you to imagine for yourselves how much more fruitful and interesting the same method would become, if applied to literature of richer and nobler character, with pupils a year or so older.

The poem I choose is *The Pilgrim Fathers*, by Mrs. Hemans :—

The breaking waves dash'd high
On a stern and rock-bound coast;
And the woods, against a stormy sky,
Their giant branches toss'd.

And the heavy night hung dark
The hills and waters o'er,
When a band of exiles moor'd their bark
On the wild New England shore.

Not as the conqueror comes,
They, true-hearted, came;—
Not with the roll of the stirring drums,
And the trumpet that sings of fame;—

Not as the flying come,
In silence and in fear;—
They shook the depths of the desert's gloom
With their hymns of lofty cheer.

Amidst the storm they sang,
Till the stars heard, and the sea;
And the sounding aisles of the dim woods rang
To the anthem of the free.

The ocean-eagle soar'd
From his nest by the white waves' foam,
And the rocking pines of the forest roar'd:—
Such was their welcome home.

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There were men with hoary hair
Amidst that pilgrim band;
Why had they come to wither there,
Away from their childhood's land?

There was woman's fearless eye,
Lit by her deep love's truth;
There was manhood's brow serenely high,
And the fiery heart of youth.

What sought they thus afar?
Bright jewels from the mine?
The wealth of seas? the spoils of war?
No—'twas a faith's pure shrine.

Yes, call that holy ground,
Which first their brave feet trod!
They have left unstained what there they found—
Freedom to worship God!

I read through the poem very slowly and as impressively as I can, striving to catch the attention and interest of my hearers, and to bring out the meaning of the words, and the feeling and intention of the author to the very fullest. Having finished the poem, I begin to ask questions as to its subject:—What is it all about? Why does the author relate it? What effect is it meant to produce upon us? Some few boys, at least, in the class, will have heard of the "Mayflower" and her crew. We turn to our history—probably Green's—and refresh our memories, and learn what caused the flight of the "Pilgrim Fathers," and what they did when they arrived in the New World, and what became of them. Then, returning to our poem, we see that we are meant to be impressed with the wildness of the place the "pilgrims" had chosen for their home; with the fact that the motive which had

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induced them to wander forth from the home of their childhood was not an ordinary one. It was not the lust of conquest; not fear; not greed of gain nor love of adventure. It was a high sense of duty—duty to God and to themselves. It is this sense of duty, and the simple, steady, courage shown—by men, women, children alike—in following the call of duty, that Mrs. Hemans holds up to our admiration; and while so holding them up, stirs us by her words with the thought, with the *desire* of doing likewise. And she ends with the boast that, in the United States at least, there has never been any persecution for conscience sake.

This, in simpler language and with much more questioning and answering, will have been enough for the first lesson.[1] I then ask my pupils to think over what we have been saying, to write me a short, very short, account of it, and to look out in their dictionary and learn the meaning of the words with which they are not familiar. This forms the home preparation for the next lesson; and this next lesson takes the form of testing the home preparation, and the pupils' remembrance of the class-lesson on the subject-matter which I have just described.

The next lesson is a more difficult one, and requires more culture, more imagination, more effort on the part of the teacher. I might call it "Metaphor and simile parsing." It consists of a close and careful examination

[1] I am a great believer, I must say, in having two or three *short* lessons each week on a subject, rather than one or two longer ones. You must suppose my lessons to be forty minutes in length. In the same way I prefer two or three short poems for beginners rather than one long one—the strain on the attention in the former case is much less, and the treatment can be made much more thorough and complete.

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into all the metaphors and similes, and also into the method of presenting the subject employed by the author. It cannot be done off-hand by even the most skilful master. It must be thought through, and the chief points decided upon, before the lesson is attempted, or we shall lose much time, and call too much attention to matters of minor importance. Yet, even if the lesson be hurriedly and badly given, it is far better for it to be given even so, than for it to be omitted altogether.

We have already determined that the first two verses are intended to impress us with the wild, hard, unpleasing nature of the land the pilgrims had chosen as their refuge: but what do the last two lines of the first verse mean? What is the meaning of "*against a stormy sky*"? A very few instances of familiar phrases will show that "*against*" means "directed towards," "in opposition to," "opposite," "close to," and "in contact with or resting upon." We arrive at our meaning by comparing several sentences in which a like use of the word occurs. Our phrase will soon be seen to signify "leaning upon the stormy sky," or "with the stormy sky for a background." We notice the appropriateness of the term "*giant*," and refer to instances of enormous American trees (at the Crystal Palace for example); but we call especial attention to the striking suggestion, which the use of the word gives, that the trees stood like the giants (with which our fathers used always to people unknown countries), and tossed their branches like arms, excitedly and threateningly, at the pilgrims.

What do we understand by "*the heavy night hung dark*"? With a little careful questioning, and here

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and there a hint, we shall soon elicit the information that the night-clouds in the sky—not light and feathery and floating as clouds mostly are—looked as if they had weight, and hung dark and ready to fall if that which supported them gave way. We have already dwelt upon the fact that the third and fourth verses seek to impress us very vividly with the idea of how and why the Pilgrim Fathers came. And to do this the author enumerates all the ways we might naturally have expected them to come in, but in which *they* did NOT come in. And so the description of how and why they actually did come, meets us with all the gathered force of expectation, and the keenness of contrast.

"*The roll of the stirring drums.*" We shall take the trouble to see that it is clearly understood that "*roll*" means "sound like that produced by rolling or rumbling," and that "*stirring drums*" means "drums that stir and excite the hearts of those that hear them—make them ready to move, eager for action." It may be objected here, that in this I am going too much into detail. Surely I might take it for granted that "*roll*" and "*stirring*" are understood by my pupils! But I would remind my objectors that my pupils are supposed to be boys or girls of ten or eleven years of age, who do not habitually live in an intellectual atmosphere. A very little experience would show any one that, though the *general* drift and meaning of a passage may be seized almost at once, yet, when we come to analyse closely there is a haziness, at times almost as thick as a London fog (in the minds of people older even than ten or eleven), about the precise force and

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meaning of the epithets and phrases. It is therefore not well to take it for granted that these are understood; but far better to take the trouble to test and see that they are. Indeed, it is one of the chief objects of a literature study of this kind, to dispel this haziness, to induce an attention to such details, and to cultivate a sensitiveness in this respect. For a real command over language varies directly with the amount of appreciation of the force and meaning of epithets and phrases, metaphors and similes.

But to proceed; "*the trumpet that sings of fame*"= "the trumpet that proclaims abroad men's fame." Not only has the trumpet long been connected in our minds with the idea of proclamations, but the boastfulness of its very sound is familiar to every one. Still why "*sings*"?—that is surely a strange way of describing its action? So it is. Yet we have not to search very far before we find a precisely similar expression. In Campbell's *The Soldier's Dream*, we have—

"Our bugles *sang* truce, for the night-cloud had lowered."

Very probably the metaphor came into occasional use from the fact that the Latin word commonly used to express the sound of the trumpet, also commonly expressed the sound of *singing*.

The next words which arrest our attention are, "*They shook the depths of the desert's gloom*"; and this, after a little examination, and a few trials, we find can best be paraphrased as "they made the gloomy, wild, unpeopled place echo far and wide."

"*Shook*"="set vibrating, made to give forth a vibrating sound, made to echo."

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"*Depths*"—this gives us not only an idea of extent, but also of extent into unseen, unknown regions, or regions but dimly seen or known. Its vagueness adds a touch of mystery and wonder to the picture. (I require my pupils to collect at home a few examples of this use of the word from their recitation-book, or elsewhere.)

"*Desert*"—the idea most commonly connected with a *desert* is that of a vast extent of barren sand. But this is by no means the only meaning, nor is it the meaning here. "*Desert*"="a wild, unpeopled, or deserted place." I ask for, or supply quotations, wherein the word manifestly has this meaning. (With elder boys it is best sometimes in simple cases to ask for quotations, to be looked out at home; with younger boys this is seldom advisable.) Such quotations for instance, as—

> "Full many a flower is born to blush unseen,
> And waste its sweetness on the *desert* air."
> (Gray, *Elegy*, l. 56.)

> "Tell her that's young,
> And shuns to have her graces spied,
> That hadst thou sprung
> In *deserts* where no men abide," etc.
> (Waller, *Go Lovely Rose.*)

> "Meanwhile this youth, like a poor shepherd clad,
> His father's flock was following day by day,
> Upon a *desert* near at hand that lay."
> (Drayton, *David and Goliath.*)

"*Lofty cheer*"—"*lofty*" because tending to raise their minds into *higher, nobler* thought and feeling.

"*Till the stars heard, and the sea*"—their voices rose high above the noise of the storm, till, in their

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excitement, the very stars seemed to them to hear their words and the sea to join in their hymns with the sound of its waves.

Of course I do not dictate at once such a paraphrase. I arrive at it by question, suggestion, and encouragement, and then give it the simplest and best form I can. But it would take me too long now in every case to go through the process. I have already given sufficient indication of it, and must ask my readers to excuse what would, I fear, be only a wearisome repetition.

"*Aisles*"—our dictionaries tell us that these are "the side passages of a church," with pillars on one or both sides, and the vaulted roof above. The whole poem being so full of religious feeling, Mrs. Hemans quite naturally borrows the term to describe the passages in the forest between the tree-stems and beneath the overarching boughs; and the term only becomes more forcible and suggestive when we remember that the wanderers had chosen the desert and the forest as their place of worship, in exchange for the narrower, more confined churches of their fatherland.

> "*The ocean-eagle soar'd*
> *From his nest by the white waves' foam.*"

What is the object of mentioning this? Well, if we went to Brighton, or Margate, or Scarborough, should we expect to see an "ocean-eagle" rise there from "his nest"? No. And why? Because ocean-eagles are only found in wild places little frequented by man. And so we see these lines are put in to give us an idea of the wildness and solitude of the place which was to become

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the home of the pilgrims. In the next verse "*hoary*" and "*pilgrim*" are easily explained from our dictionary, and the word "hoar" (=white) is remembered as existing in more than one common phrase. "*Wither*" too, is very suggestive; as if these older pilgrims, torn up from their native land, were like trees which had been transplanted too late, and therefore likely soon to wither. So, too, in "*childhood's land*" the word *childhood* awakens in us all the dearest and tenderest associations of our lives, filling us with gentle pity for the wanderers who were about to begin life again in a new and strange country.

> "*There was woman's fearless eye,*
> *Lit by her deep love's truth;*
> *There was manhood's brow serenely high,*
> *And the fiery heart of youth.*"

The first, third, and fourth lines introduce us to a very noticeable form of expression. Instead of having "there were fearless-eyed women," we have "there was the fearless eye of woman." And why? By our former methods of inquiry we shall soon learn that it is because "the fearless eye" was the most marked characteristic of the women on this occasion. The writer wishes us to feel this, and to picture it to ourselves. But, if we look a little further, we shall find this form of expression common enough. A manufacturer speaks of the number of "hands" in his factory; instead of saying "the queen," we say "the queen's majesty" or "her majesty;" we speak of "the hearts that guard our island home"; and so on. And I require my boys to gather as many similar examples as they can for me at home for our next lesson. So, "the serenely high

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brow" is to be taken as the most marked characteristic of the men, and "the fiery heart" that of youth. But why is the women's love said to be "*deep*"? Partly to give you an idea that there is much of it, but chiefly to let you see that it stretches so far down into the heart, is so firmly planted there, that it cannot be easily overturned or uprooted. So, the brow of manhood is said to be "*serenely high*," because a high forehead is generally the outward physical sign of mental power; from which come thoughtfulness, and then calm, quiet resolve, and nobleness. And "*fiery heart*"—what of that? "*Fiery*" is of course "partaking of the qualities of fire." But why should the "hearts of the young" be said to do so? Because they are excitable, and often beautiful in their excitement—full of sudden strength or hot fierceness; strong and quick to do evil, and strong and quick to do good; with little mastery over themselves —like fire.

The next verse vividly calls back our attention to the reason why the pilgrim band had fled for refuge to this wild country. I will treat it as an example of what I mean by "paraphrase"—that is, an expansion and exposition of the *meaning*, not a mere breaking up and destruction of the sentences, to be reset not half so well. What had they come thus far to seek? Bright jewels from the mines of the New World, which so many of their countrymen were then in the habit of coming for? The wealthy produce of the fisheries? Or, like so many other Englishmen, to make war upon the Spaniards, and spoil them of the gold which they had wrung from the miserable Indians of the Main? No—they had come to seek a pure free place to worship

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in—a *shrine*, a temple after their own hearts, beyond the reach of persecution, and the interference of their fellows. Yes, we may well call that holy ground which first felt the tread of their brave feet. Seldom in the world's history have men and women dared such dangers, and endured such hardships, for such a cause. Let us remember this, and honour them for this. And let us not forget that they left unstained, unspoiled, what they came to seek, and what they found there—freedom to worship God after man's own heart.

In the case of a longer poem, all this would, of course, have to be divided into several lessons; and between these we should, in that case, have to insert "test-lessons"—lessons, that is, to test and refresh the memory concerning the information already gathered and imparted. These should consist mainly of paraphrase—prepared and written out at home—either of the whole or of part of the immediately preceding lesson. A certain number of these exercises should be read out by the writers, and their shortcomings discussed and corrected, the teacher ending with giving the best paraphrase he himself can manage. The chief point to be attended to is, that the *whole* meaning is given. Never mind how long it is, so that the paraphrase omits nothing. It is only from older and well-practised pupils that we can hope to get paraphrases quite full, and yet short. With young boys it is impossible, *any* exercise of the sort being extremely hard to them at first.

Here then, in the case of our "pilgrim fathers," will follow our paraphrasing; my treatment of the last two verses will show fairly well what I want. I would, for

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boys of ten or eleven years of age, divide the poem I am treating into two parts, and require the paraphrase of the *whole* of each part—thus giving us two more lessons of careful recapitulation. I finish by requiring my pupils to read the poem aloud, that I may have one more test, and that one of the best, as to whether the meaning of the poem has really been mastered and felt.

As we advance to older and older pupils, an account of the author and his period may, perhaps, at times become of some value. But I must warn you as to the use of the *History* or *Primer of Literature*, which we shall want for such lessons. Do not use it as a mere record of facts to be learnt as we learn the geographical facts of a country. Very little is gained by so doing—at least very little in the way of training. Use the book simply for the account given of an author and his period, *when we have just finished the study of one or two of the works of that author*. Or, still better, choose half-a-dozen of the shorter poems of half-a-dozen authors belonging to the same period, and leave the account of the doings of all the authors, and of their period as a whole, till all the half-dozen poems have been studied. Our object should simply be to increase the interest in the poems themselves. Sometimes a well-written book of this kind excites our pupils' curiosity, and sets them reading for themselves the works of other authors which they find so highly spoken of. But, after all, the main thing to look to is that, whatever we do, with notes or histories of literature, or exposition—whatever it be, it should always drive us back on the text of the author (not draw us from it), drive us back with fuller appreciation and understanding and keener delight. If what we do

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fails to effect this, it is hurtful, not helpful, and had better, far better, be left alone.

I have now to state what special benefits are, in my opinion, to be derived from a study of Literature such as I have described. Unless I have been very clumsy in the account I have just given, I think most of my readers will be able to guess what these are.

First, then, our pupils will gain a very large and serviceable addition to their *vocabulary*. An American professor once pointed out that the number of words used by our most eloquent speakers, such as Mr. Gladstone or Mr. John Bright, amounted to eight or nine thousand, while the number used by an ordinary peasant hardly reached three hundred. I am afraid that the vocabulary of our pupils even in Middle-Class Schools, approaches far nearer in limit to that of the peasant than to that of Mr. Gladstone. We are all familiar with the difficulty our pupils find in giving a really good clear answer to even an ordinary question, and with the frequent excuse, that they know the information required, but do not know how to give it. Again, how poor are the essays of most of our best pupils, even when the substance of the essay has been carefully suggested, or actually given. All this arises, I am convinced, largely from a poverty of vocabulary. There is not a sufficient fund of words ready at hand for use. The same words are used again and again, when others would suit the sense far better. This is a very serious drawback, a very heavy clog upon our work, not only in essay-writing, but in almost every subject which a school course commonly embraces. Anything, therefore, which tends to lighten this clog

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must be welcomed as a great boon to both teacher and taught. And this is one of the most certain of the advantages gained by the study of Literature.

But, besides a large increase in vocabulary, our pupils will also gain by means of this study a much clearer knowledge of the *meaning and the right use of words.* And, in gaining a knowledge of the *meaning* of words, they must perforce gain a large increase in their stock of ideas, must learn how to look at things in many and various ways, and how to express themselves. Moreover, a *right use of words* is closely connected with a right method of thought; for, in considering and discussing the one we are drawn inevitably to consider and discuss the other. A slovenly and inaccurate use of words—which commonly indicates a slovenly and inaccurate way of thinking—is not absolutely uncommon in our Public Schools, and even amongst those of us who have left school for many years. And yet the cure for it is easily enough obtained, if we will only study the writings and the speech of those who are skilled in expressing their thoughts well and forcibly, and practise ourselves in doing likewise. But, for some reason or other, this cure is but little resorted to in our schools; and when English Literature does form a part of the regular school course, it is not studied for the thought it contains nor for the methods used to express that thought, but for the sake of the grammatical, philological, and antiquarian questions which may be made to hang on it; while the essays are nearly always on subjects on which the children have nothing of their own to say.

In close connection with the knowledge of the

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meaning and right use of words, our pupils will gain by the study I am discussing an insight into and an acquaintance with *the right use and power of metaphors and similes.* I know of no surer or readier test of the fertility, originality, and imaginative power of a writer than the way in which he uses his metaphors and similes. In Shakspere, Taylor, Milton, Burke, in Keats and Shelley, in Hall, Coleridge, Macaulay, in Tennyson and Ruskin—in all these, over and above the melody of their language, and the power and beauty of their thoughts, what attract, charm, and hold our admiration, are the power and the excellent imagination of their metaphors and similes. They are like the bright, gleaming king-mark which our northern ancestors held to be always the true sign of the man of royal birth. To educate and instruct our pupils in the right use of these is to start them on the way towards learning and appreciating all that is best and finest in literary expression—to lead them to the fairyland of poetry, and give them the power of seeing and feeling its magic and its wonders. They will learn too, by this means, how they may attract and command attention. No teacher, who has his heart in his work, can fail to realise the power which the art of attracting and holding attention gives. This does not depend wholly, or even in a great measure, on a skilful arrangement of subject; but more, far more, on a skilful use of language. And I cannot think of any position in civic or domestic life in which it is not of great advantage to any one to have gained the mastery of his mother-tongue.

But, above and beyond the advantages I have

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already enumerated, there are others which, though often sneered at, are to my mind of the deepest, and highest, and widest value. I mean the advantages to be derived from the study of the thoughts, and feelings, and aspirations of our best and wisest writers—not only of the language which they use, but of that which they use language to express. No teacher, who thinks about the matter at all seriously, can fail to see what a great opportunity we have here for awakening and enlarging the intellects of our pupils; for creating in them new sympathies and new interests; for refining and elevating their natures; for leading them within the influence of "that most subtle master under heaven," the love of truth, and beauty, and nobleness. It should, I think, be clear to any one what is to be gained by bringing those whose minds and hearts are still fresh and open to noble impulses into close contact with true greatness and wisdom, earnest longings, noble purity, and strength, passionate or tender love of beauty. For it may be that, when some quiet evening one of these busy learners is listening to the music, and wondering at the beauty of noble hearts and minds, and all his blood is astir within him, and his spirit awake, suddenly he may in the stillness catch the sound of the same music in his own heart, and hearing it become aware of his own possibilities of nobleness and beauty; so that henceforth life becomes a reality to him also, and a thing wonderful and holy!

"We learn," said John Stuart Mill, in his address to the students of St. Andrews in 1867, "we learn to respect ourselves only so far as we feel capable of nobler objects . . . . to sustain ourselves by the ideal

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sympathy of the great characters of history or even in fiction, and by the contemplation of an idealised posterity. Now of this elevated tone of mind the great source of inspiration is poetry, and all literature so far as it is poetical and artistic. . . . Nor is it only loftiness, only the heroic feelings that are bred by poetic cultivation. Its power is as great in calming the soul as in elevating it—in fostering the milder emotions, as the more exalted. It brings home to us all those aspects of life which take hold of our nature on its unselfish side, and lead us to identify our joy and grief with the good or ill of the system of which we form a part; and all those solemn or pensive feelings, which, without having any direct application to conduct, incline us to take life seriously, and predispose us to the reception of anything which comes before us in the shape of duty."

To effect this, or to try to effect it, we must not treat the books which form our study as things only to be picked to pieces, analysed, and annotated; but as works of art, works of genius, to be studied and appreciated as the expression of wisdom, and thought, and imagination. Do not let us run away with the idea that we shall spoil the delight our pupils might otherwise take in such books by making them the subject of study. We do not take less delight, but more, in a fine picture, because we happen to know something about painting. We do not find less enjoyment, but more, in music, because we happen to have studied the subject. We do not feel less pleasure, but more, in a beautiful sunset, because we happen to be familiar with many fine descriptions and

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pictures of such scenes. Surely, in any case, he is but a bungling teacher who contrives to make *any* subject distasteful to his pupils simply by using it as a means of education. It is time to bury this foolish superstition of the old mechanical unskilful days. It is only putting an excuse into the mouths of idle boys, and may safely be left to the care of over-fond parents. Like the ghost of Hamlet's father it feels the cold morning air—the morning air of our new day—and should be in its grave. Nowadays, a school is not a place hateful to boys, nor are school subjects, as such, distasteful to any large number of them. Let us be quite certain on one point, that if we find our pupils yawning and dull over any subject, the fault, in nine cases out of ten, lies with us, and *not* with the pupils or the subject. But the man who ingeniously contrives to make the study of English Literature flat and uninteresting, must be blessed with a very extraordinary amount of dulness, a more than ordinary unfitness for the profession of schoolmaster. It has been my good fortune to meet with but few masters incapable of treating this subject with some degree of success; while many have shown a remarkable aptitude for it. I have noticed, too, that those masters who, by force of circumstances, have been led in self-defence to pay special attention to the teaching of English Literature, have invariably exhibited, as the result, a very visible and valuable increase in the brightness and vigour of their class work generally.

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ENGLISH LITERATURE IN SCHOOLS: HOW THE TEACHER AND THE EXAMINER SHOULD DEAL WITH IT[1]

A LITTLE while ago, it used to be thought—and the opinion is, I believe, still held by a few—it used to be thought that the only way to deal with literature in schools was to choose a piece of poetry which one liked oneself very much and give it to the pupils. If they seemed to understand it and to take to it, well and good; if they did not, well, they were hopelessly dull, and there was nothing to be done. You might, perhaps, tell them that you liked the poem, and let your voice tremble a little when you mentioned its name. But beyond that all was sacrilege, mere degradation of the beautiful. To give a school flavour, and to fill up the time, you might require the whole or part of the poem to be learnt by heart; and you could require the notes at the end to be got up. These would explain a few hard words and phrases, and add a few scraps of philology and antiquarianism. Some authorities prescribe spelling and parsing. You ended up the whole with an examination, without which no

[1] A Lecture delivered before the College of Preceptors on March 18th, 1891.

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subject is complete. In the examination you asked whatever chanced to strike your fancy, while at the same time you endeavoured to preserve the appearance of abstruse learning. For the life of me, I have never been able to discern where, in all this, the education came in—at least, if education is to be taken to mean the effects in knowledge, development, and skill, which one mind consciously produces on another. Nor do I see why we should call the process *Lessons in Literature*, any more than we should call breaking stones by the roadside Lessons in Geology. Of the two exercises I prefer the stone-breaking; for though, like the lessons in question, it covers you with much dust, while it spoils your facility of movement and the delicacy of your touch, still it does strengthen your arm; whereas the lessons referred to produce no beneficial result whatever. They do not even teach you spelling; nor do they improve the memory, for the memory is hurt, and not helped, when what is distasteful and ill-understood is thrust upon it. But we have moved somewhat during the last ten years; and I trace progress and improvement in the fact that there is an increase, slow but steady, in the number of people who not only disbelieve in the plan I have described, but also believe in the possibility of a better plan. To disbelieve is so easy and so cheap, and at times has almost the appearance of thoughtfulness. But positive belief in something better is the only test of real value.

The error of the plan I have been speaking of seems to me to arise partly from the mistaken idea that the teaching of Latin and Greek in our schools is *literature*

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teaching; and partly from the endeavour to transfer the method used for Latin and Greek to the teaching of English, without noticing that most of the conditions in the two cases are not the same. But to assume that all pupils who are not preternaturally dull must be able at once and of themselves to understand any piece of poetry as soon as it is put before them, shows an ignorance both of child-nature and of the art of all good poets. A poet, whether he writes for a little clan or for a whole nation, presupposes many things in his readers. He assumes that the materials he uses are either already familiar to them or may be readily understood and imagined by them: that, inasmuch as he both aims at suggestion and works by means of suggestions, these will be perceived and appreciated: that the language he uses, his treatment of his subject, and his method of construction are all well within the powers of his readers: that they possess certain feelings, and that what he sets before them will call these feelings into action. He trusts that the associations which attach themselves to the things mentioned and to the very words and phrases used, will exist for his readers as well as for himself. He counts on his allusions and the particular bearing of them being known and perceived, or they will darken and not shed light upon his meaning. Nay, if the writer be a Milton or a Virgil or a Burke, he will go further, and import into his work phrases, lines, and even whole passages from well-known sources, with little or no change in them; and, not fearing the charge of plagiary, will rely on the very *familiarity* of his borrowings to produce an effect of literary beauty. He expects the descriptive power of

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his epithets to be appreciated, the graphic force of his metaphors, the beautifying and illustrative effects of his similes, to be perceived and recognised. He appeals constantly to the general experience of humanity. These things, and perhaps others, the literary artist demands from his readers. He will succeed or fail mainly according to his skill in these matters—though, of course, his special singing gift and novelty of invention will also count for much, especially with the highly cultured few. The list I have given is a long one, but of course I do not intend to imply that all these demands are made in every case. We must, however, be prepared for all or any of them being made in any particular poem.

If you now call to mind your knowledge of what children know, what they feel, and the degree and nature of their insight into language, the first result will probably be a disposition to deny that Literature is a subject fitted for school use. But a little reflection and some small amount of experience will, I think, cause you to modify this opinion. You will see that, though it may not ever be possible to convey to our pupils the *whole* of the author's meaning (how few adults ever take in the *whole* meaning), it may still be possible to convey *enough* of the meaning to make the endeavour worth our while. You will notice that poems and prose works differ considerably in the character, degree, and number of the demands which they make on the reader; and that what is hard under one set of circumstances may be easy under another set. For instance, it is one thing to use *John Gilpin* with little London children, and quite another to use it with, say, children

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in a country village in Devonshire; while, again, a poem about ants and beetles and glowworms will be more readily imagined by country than by town children. I need not go into detailed argument in this matter. You will, I know, agree with me that a choice of pieces suitable for educational use may be made; and that to meet the various degrees of progress and development of our pupils the pieces chosen may be arranged in a properly graded series, according to the character, degree, and number of the demands which they make on the reader. What I want more particularly to urge upon you is that, when making your choice and when about to give your lesson, you should carefully observe and consider what the demands of the piece in question actually are; whether any of them can be met by what the pupils already know and feel; whether the children can be helped to know and to feel what is wanted for the rest; and, if so, how. If you consent to consider these points, it will not be necessary for me to lay any stress on a fact of my experience—and probably also of yours—that the difference in result is immense between leading our pupils through a carefully graded course, and plunging them (as we too often do, especially in Latin and Greek) headlong into literature, the greater part of which is wholly outside their sympathies, and much beyond their powers to imagine and to understand.

One of the first and most important things, then, which call for our attention in literature-teaching is the *introductory lesson*, or rather *talk*, which is to prepare our pupils for the demands about to be made on them; the recalling and brightening up of the material already

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possessed and which is now needed, the imparting of the fresh material required, the glimpse at the kind of construction which is to follow—which will often mean the bringing in of a rough model of some kind, *e.g.*, a football match to introduce a battle, modern emigration to introduce the coming of the Danes, pictures of people and places, etc.—the attuning of the feelings, the awakening of interest; or, as I have sometimes more briefly expressed it, the putting the child in the right place, turning his face in the right direction, and striking the key-note. If the poem be very short, all this can be done at once; if it be long, then this preparatory work should be done in easy stages, introduced just when they are wanted. Do not think that I am recommending anything elaborate and grandiose. You will not, of course, like an Italian peasant, build a large and imposing gateway to lead up to the merest scrap of a cottage. Everything should be in proportion and in harmony, both with the subject and with the children. Even we grown-up people know in our own persons how, at times, a little preliminary chat on the subject will put us in the right tune for a picture, or music, or a play which, otherwise, might perhaps have found us somewhat cold and sluggish and irresponsive. Some years ago I published in the *Journal of Education* two specimens of such introductory talks as I mean;[1] and you will find a very good one, of a somewhat similar nature, by Mr. H. C. Beeching, in his excellent little edition of *Julius Cæsar*. As a rule, editors of English classics for schools give us instead a biography of the author and a discourse on dates and originals—useful for getting

[1] See Appendix A.

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up with a view to marks. I do not know any other use they can have in schools.

I will now touch upon the various other points of importance in literature-teaching, taking them as they occur to me, and not meaning to imply anything by the order in which they come; but before doing so I should like to be allowed to restate what I said in 1881 as to what I mean by "literature-teaching." "By the study of literature as literature, I mean the study of a poem or prose work for the sake of its substance, its form, and its style; for the sake of the thought and imagination and feeling it contains, and the methods used to express these; for the sake of its lofty, large, or acute perception of things; its power of exposition; the beauty, force, and meaning of its metaphors, its similes, and its epithets; the strength and music of its language. . . . My aim is to lead my pupils to appreciate thought as thought, a work of art as a work of art: and thereby not only to enlarge, enrich, and refine their minds and hearts, but also to bring them to a knowledge and ability of expressing themselves, when they have something to say, both correctly and well."

The Subject-matter.—By this I mean something more than the mere story of the play or poem. It should also include the ideas dealt with and set forth. In Shakspere's plays, for instance, there is the exposition of character and of human life; in *Comus*, the plea for purity and "true virginity," and the thinly-veiled allegorical reference to contemporary religion; in Blake's *Dream*, pity for the little things of this world and the evidence of providential care for them all; in Southey's *Blenheim*, the condemnation of war; and so

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on. These things are often of more value than the story itself—if there be a story at all. Sometimes they are so manifest that we need only call attention to them and pass on. Sometimes they are intricate and elusive, or wholly beyond our pupils' range of knowledge and feeling—so that we have to omit them and content ourselves with the story only. What I wish to urge is that, if we omit them, we should do so consciously and for good reasons. We are far too much given to taking it for granted that our pupils have noticed and understood what has been placed before them. Our task as teachers is to attract attention, to aid understanding, to stir feeling; and we cannot do this by silence and indifference. A word or two at the right time will often be quite enough; and commonly this will best come in the introductory talk. We must not forget that most of the literature we have to use was not written for children. We have to adapt it to them, and them to it, to bring them within its range; and this requires care and skill—not very unlike the care and skill required in primary science lessons in observation. Our task is not to force *our* opinions and refinements on our pupils, but to attract and to hold *their* attention.

I have mentioned the *exposition of character* as one of the things to bear in mind in connection with a play of Shakspere's. The common plan is to give our pupils the exposition of some notable critic—Coleridge, or Gervinus, or Dowden, or Mrs. Jameson, or another—and to leave them to get it up. I do not think this plan a good one educationally. It is better than nothing, it is true, and often pays in examination. But

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that is all that can be said for it, even when we do require (which is not often, I fear) a few illustrative quotations from the play to be added. It distracts the pupils' attention from the facts themselves, and brings them into a habit of trying to say things prettily rather than to say them truly. Some of the characters have been so embroidered upon in this way by the critics, that all the original form and colour is hidden, and Shakspere himself would not recognise where his own work came in. A better plan is to collect at any rate the *chief* sayings of a character; to decide briefly in each case what sort of a person he or she must be to say such a thing on such an occasion; to add what the other persons say about the one in question: and then to unite these results into one construction. After this —not before—may come the descriptions of the notable critics. This work done by pupils and teacher together will often enough be very faulty, and much inferior, I fear, to what Coleridge, or Charles Lamb, or Dowden would do. But it is the right kind of work, is extremely interesting, promotes close attention to the wording of the play, and fosters the habit of getting your facts first, and then drawing your conclusions from the evidence before you. The constructiveness of the final stage is of especial value educationally, when the different traits are collected, and then modified, reconciled, and united into one complete character.

Text.—Then there is the *text*—that is, the mode in which the author expresses himself, the wording of his sentences, the precise epithets, metaphors, similes, etc., which he uses in particular passages. Much of this—or perhaps all of it in the case of a short poem—may

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be learnt by heart. But the main thing is to ensure that the forms of expression used are understood and appreciated—for they then become part of the learner's own power and means of utterance; otherwise they do not. To effect this, something must be made to result from and depend upon the understanding and appreciation. The work just referred to under the head of description of characters will do this excellently; and so will the paraphrasing, or complete interpretation, of passages. Mere rote-learning commonly betrays itself by inaccuracies impartially made in the important and unimportant words alike. The learner who has learnt intelligently, may make mistakes, too; but these seldom affect the important words.

Paraphrasing.—There is frequently so much misunderstanding connected with the meaning of the term "paraphrasing," that I must ask leave to treat the matter somewhat fully. I have called it the complete interpretation of passages. I might also call it an exercise in thought-reading. It is not a rearrangement or change of words which is demanded, but the unpacking and exhibiting clearly and at large of the whole meaning of a passage which, in the author in question, is expressed in a brief and condensed or figurative form, or perhaps, at times, rather suggested than expressed. It requires in the pupil a knowledge of the real force of the allusions, and of the bearing of the passage as a whole on its context, and the occasion on which it is used. It requires an appreciation of the exact force and intention of the metaphors, similes, and epithets, and a consciousness of that *associated* meaning or colour which certain words and phrases acquire, and which

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are brought out most distinctly in the contrasts between so-called synonyms. It is only when this knowledge of, this insight into, what the author desires to convey to us has been sought for and gained, that we are in a position to truly appreciate, and really delight in, the art and beauty of his mode of expression. To ascertain whether our pupils have gained this knowledge and insight, we must require them to tell us what the passage has told them. This exercise in giving outward expression to the thoughts and feelings which they have made their own is of great value educationally. We do not substitute our much lesser selves for Milton or Bacon, but strive to observe, understand, and feel the power and beauty of *their* language; nor is there a better way than the exercise proposed to "prevent a boy from contenting himself with the vague knowledge which is not knowledge at all, but mere impression, supported by dim disconnected images, or, it may be, by the mere musical sounds or rhythm of the language." Let me take a particular instance—from Wordsworth:—

> "I have learned
> To look on nature, not as in the hour
> Of thoughtless youth; but hearing oftentimes
> The still sad music of humanity."

What we want our pupils to do is to think out and tell us in their own way—but in a connected statement—what is meant by the metaphor "music of humanity," and why this music is said to be "still sad," and in what respects the attitude of mind implied in this, differs from that "in thoughtless youth," and why this newly acquired power is also a "joy." When these

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things have been grasped, and understood, and stated, then, and not till then, shall we be able to appreciate the skill and beauty with which Wordsworth has expressed the ideas.

There is another mode of interpretation which I have used with the happiest results—"picture-paraphrase" or the translation of *word*-pictures into *form*-pictures by means of drawing, or, as I prefer to call it, "graphic representation." We make no demand for *art* in such work; and the exercise can be used with the youngest pupils. It consists in requiring the pupils to "represent" on paper a scene or action or figure from their poem. It induces a close examination of what the poem actually says; it causes the formation of definite, clear mental images; it allows the pupil to use in expressing himself that kind of language most intelligible to the young—pictures; and it affords the teacher an excellent means of testing how far the pupils have understood what has been described. Often enough the pictures are awkward, hard to understand, very droll indeed. Don't laugh at them—at least while the children are present. Try to understand them, to be able to read them. It will be worth your while as teachers, to do so, for this is one of the best means I know of for finding out the contents of children's minds—yes, and of adult minds too. Moreover, remember that many (especially novices in the use of language) can express even in the clumsiest diagram or outline what they cannot express in any other way.[1]

Allusions.—There are two points to be attended to in dealing with allusions, viz., the origin from whence

[1] See Appendix B.

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the allusion is drawn and the application of the allusion to the context in which it is used. Teachers and annotators of text-books are usually careful enough about the former point; but the latter they frequently omit altogether. To take a few instances: When the elder brother in *Comus* calls for "some gentle taper" to be his "Star of Arcady or Tyrian Cynosure," it is not sufficient to give an account of Calisto, daughter of Lycaon, king of Arcadia, and of her being changed into the constellation of the Greater Bear, while her son Arcas was changed into that of the Lesser Bear or Cynosure. We still require to be told that the brother is asking for a light or star *to steer by*. Indeed, the latter information is the more important of the two. The same remark applies to what is usually dragged in in the wake of such expressions as "Bellona's bridegroom," "caviare to the general," "it out-herods Herod," and the like. The last-named is sometimes a peculiarly unhappy instance of mistaken learning. Under "Herod" we are usually given a short biography—not always of the right Herod. Unfortunately, the reference is not to the historical Herod at all—has nothing to do with the massacre of the Innocents—the reference is to the Herod of the Miracle Play, a blustering ranting character; and the phrase only means "it out-rants the greatest ranter." This we usually are not told. So again, Keats'

> "She could have ta'en
> Achilles by the hair and bent his neck"

does not need a long account of the Trojan War; nor does Gray's

> "Some mute inglorious Milton here may rest"

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require a life of the great Puritan poet. In the former case, what we have to bring out is the idea of size and strength; in the latter, "Milton" is used as the term for a poet notably neither mute nor inglorious. This mistake runs through a great variety of degrees, and is closely akin to that constantly made when dealing with similes—everything is told you *except* what would make the meaning and beauty of the simile clear.

Words and Phrases.—If in our work with our class we meet with a very rare and antiquated word, its meaning, I think, had better be given at once. If there is anything very striking in its derivation, and *if this be really to the point*, this may perhaps be added. So, when little Ellie sends to her warrior lover "a white rosebud for a guerdon," we may explain *guerdon* as a *gift* for *warlike* service, referring to the French *if the children know that language.* "Saturnine," a rare word for children, may be made more memorable by a reference to being born under the planet Saturn, and may be associated with *jovial, mercurial, disaster*, etc. But there is great danger, in this matter of derivation, of our trying to teach the unknown by the still more unknown: and of our playing the pedant by affecting knowledge which we either do not possess, or which is not wanted now. Words have a way of outgrowing their original meaning, as children do their frocks; and what we want in literature-teaching is not how a word came by the meaning it has now, but what the meaning actually *is* now and in the passage in question. In such a case the derivation is oftenest a hindrance rather than a help to the learner. The teacher should always think whether the added in-

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formation will render the meaning now wanted more striking, more memorable. If so, give it; if not, refrain. Often a word, somewhat unusual, may be made clear by grouping it with its near relatives, *if these are in common use.* So the verb "to ban" may be made clearer and easier to remember by associating it with *abandon, banns, banish, bandit.* By comparison we may form a general idea of the meaning common to them all. But oftenest our difficulties arise with words which have one very common meaning, and another not so common. For instance, children must often be puzzled, as I once was, how Gray's flower could "waste its sweetness on the *desert* air"—*desert* called up in my mind the picture of a vast extent of barren sand, not exactly a place where *flowers* would grow. But in Pope we find "roses that in *deserts* bloom and die"; Drayton makes a youth feed his flock "upon a *desert* near at hand that lay"; while, again, in *As You Like It,* the Forest of Arden is frequently spoken of as a *desert.* Put these passages and other like ones together, and compare them, and the meaning will soon show itself in a very striking way—that *desert* properly means an unpeopled solitary place, and has nothing necessarily to do with sand. You may clinch the result by introducing *deserter, desertion,* and *to desert.* So we may arrive at the meaning of *all* in

"All in the wild March morning I heard the angels call,"

by comparing its use here with its use in Gay's

"A damsel lay deploring,
All on a rock reclined."

his

"*All* in the downs the fleet was moored"

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and Coleridge's

"*All* in a hot and copper sky."

Our difficulties with *phrases* are of a somewhat different nature. They arise from our jumping to the conclusion that because we know the meaning of every word in a phrase, therefore we know the meaning of the phrase as a whole—at least we take this for granted in the cases of our pupils. Because we know the meaning of "flattered" and "tears," it does not follow that we, or at any rate that our pupils, fully understand Keats when, in speaking of the Beadsman, he says that music's golden tongue "*flatter'd to tears* this aged man and poor." So again we must not take for granted that our pupils will understand Keats' "Sad spaces of oblivion," his vintage that "tastes of sunburnt mirth"; Gray's "the boast of heraldry," or Tennyson's "a streamer of the northern morn," and his "the full-faced presence of the gods," and the like. We understand "music" and "humanity." Will any one tell me offhand what Wordsworth means by "the music of humanity" in the passage I quoted earlier in my paper? But this brings me into the domain of metaphors, of which I must now speak.

Metaphors and Similes.—A simile is a comparison by means of which anything is illustrated or explained. A metaphor is a condensed simile, or the substitution of an idea which properly applies to one thing for some other idea associated with the first, but which applies to another thing. So the simile in "he checked his anger as one who bridled a horse" is condensed into a metaphor in "he bridled his anger," the idea of

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bridling which applies to a *horse* being substituted for the associated idea of *checking*, which applies to *anger*. A metaphor or a simile may aid the understanding, call forth or intensify a feeling, or give an agreeable surprise. As Mr. R. G. Moulton has said,[1] the main interest of metaphor, as of all imagery, belongs to the actual association of the two ideas, one of which is substituted for the other—the way in which that association assists the vividness of poetic realisation, or appeals, by its newness, quaintness, intrinsic beauty, to the imagination. It is plain that the teacher should be continually conscious of this, and endeavour, by expanding, questioning out, and picturing out the metaphors, to bring their force and beauty home to his pupils. Keats' "nest of woe" where the wounded Titans lie and writhe—which reminds one of Shakspere's "nest of death" (in *Romeo and Juliet*), and Tennyson's "high nest of penance" (in *St. Simeon Stylites*). But it is hardly necessary for me to give examples. The whole language is alive with metaphor, and gains much of its force by this means. Very much of this metaphorical meaning, however, has now become unconscious; and it is only when it is conscious that we can reckon it as a poetic implement. We must therefore be careful to consider how far this is likely to have been the case when the poet in question wrote. For example, *horrid*, *hideous*, *secure*, etc., are almost certain to be metaphorically alive in Milton, and not very likely to be so in Tennyson.

[1] In the spring of 1890 Mr. R. G. Moulton delivered an admirable course of lectures on "Milton's Poetic Art" to large audiences in the North of England. In these lectures he treated Milton's similes and metaphors very fully.

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It is even more important for us to pay attention to *similes*, not only because they play so prominent and so varied a part in general speech, and above all in poetry, but because experience tells us that our pupils (like ourselves) are very liable, especially when the simile is pretty in itself, to pass on, content with a very hazy notion as to what the comparison really implies, and so to lose much of the beauty, and not a little of the meaning. Poets themselves sometimes get lost in their own similes, and go on elaborating them without any thought of their original purpose. Keats, and even Milton, do so occasionally. I cannot but think that, even in so simple a case as "like summer tempest came her tears," it is worth while to pause and ask the children what the most marked characteristic of the coming of a summer tempest is, and how the coming of her tears resembled it. In this matter it would be well for the teacher to make some little study of the uses of similes—in such a book as Bain's "Rhetoric and Composition," for instance; or to specially observe their varying literary purpose in some such master of similes as Homer, Virgil, Spenser, Milton, or Pope. The picture-making simile—as when Milton makes the council-hall in Hell rise like an exhalation, or Satan in Chaos spring upward like a pyramid of fire, or cherubs descend on Eden like evening mist; the expository simile, to help the understanding, as that of scale, when Milton compares Satan to Leviathan, his shield to the moon seen through a telescope, and so on; the simile to help one to realise a difficult idea by bringing in something less strange, something not wholly unfamiliar, as when the rebel

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army on the wing is likened to a flight of locusts, or the colour of the land in Hell to ground left bare by earthquake and singed by subterranean fire; and many another kind. In other words, the teacher should call attention, not only to the meaning of a simile, but also to the particular nature of its use as a literary instrument in the case in question—in no elaborate way, of course, but just so far as to convey a sense of literary art. Try to do without the simile; change it slightly, now in this way, and now in that; compare results, and the true value of the original will soon reveal itself. In any case do not imagine that you can treat a work of art as a work of art by ignoring its art altogether.

Epithets.—It will not be necessary for me to say many words about *epithets*, partly because they are, as a rule, less neglected than the other points I have referred to, and partly because I should have to say over again what I have already said—question out, picture out, illustrate your epithets. No one is, I suppose, so careless as not to note so striking an epithet as that in Keats' "*azure-lidded* sleep," which reminds one of Perdita's "violets dim, but sweeter than the lids of Juno's eyes," or that in his "*poppied* warmth of sleep," which used to delight so keenly my old friend Cotter Morison. The quaint, or far-fetched, or highly-coloured epithet we may be sure will attract attention to itself. It is the quiet and subdued epithet of unobtrusive beauty and fitness which so constantly escapes our pupils' observation and our own; and yet it is in such that so much of the finest fancy and feeling is revealed. I will quote two instances from Tennyson to show you what I mean:—

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"Far up the *solitary* morning smote
The peaks of virgin snow."

"Rolling a *slumbrous* sheet of foam below."

Try to set down all that is suggested, and meant to be suggested, by "solitary" and "slumbrous."

A careful study of, and a clear insight into, the matters I have mentioned lie, I feel sure of it, at the very base of a sound study of literature. The haziness of understanding, the confused picturing, the vagueness of appreciation so often to be noticed in minds, not only at school, with regard to what has been written or said, is largely, if not mainly, due to carelessness in these respects. The general meaning is hurriedly snatched at, and minor matters are left to take care of themselves. Such a mode of reading may do well enough for newspapers and railway novels; but when dealing with works of real art, we need the attentive eye, the searching, picture-making mind, and the feeling which responds truly and clearly to the artist's touch, and which therefore helps instead of confusing his meaning. These can only be trained by the habitual exercise of observation and thoughtfulness with regard to those things which the literary artist himself studies, the means which he himself employs to convey to us what he sees and feels and thinks, with regard, viz., to epithets, metaphors, and the rest; by resolutely dealing with the subject-matter (the ideas of the writer), and with the method and material which he makes use of to bring his ideas home to us. Literature-teaching is art-teaching, and should in every way be linked with art, and made intelligible

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by the principles of art. Let the antiquary and grammarian stand aside.

And now what about the examiner? Well, to tell you the truth, I have throughout had the examiner in my mind quite as much as the teacher. I cannot conceive of any one being a good examiner who is not, first of all, a good teacher. We often hear it said that the examination should follow the teaching, and not the teaching the examination. I am not quite sure that I understand what this means. It has at times almost the appearance of a teacher's desire to appeal, not to the public and open court, but to that private and secret tribunal where, as Burke says, each one of us is sure of being heard with favour, or where, at worst, the sentence will be only private whipping. I would rather take it to mean that no one can examine well in any subject who cannot also teach well in that subject; that the principles of sound teaching must guide us to the principles of sound examining. It would manifestly deprive an examination of all real value—even when it is an examination of only one school, and when many schools are grouped together the plan would be impossible—if the teacher were to dictate the kind of questions to be asked, and to object to all others. If in English literature, for instance, he were to say, "We have only read the poem through," or, "We have only got up the notes at the end; you must not ask any questions on paraphrasing and metaphors, and the rest,"—that would not be sound teaching, and, therefore, it cannot be sound examining. The only difference I can see between the teacher and the examiner is, that the former has to apply his knowledge

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of his subject to the cases of a limited number of particular individual pupils of a certain age, while the latter has to keep before his mind the general or average pupil of that age. If you only want to find out how much the pupils remember and to place them in an order of merit—that of course can be done, and best, I think, by the teacher himself. But if you want to ascertain whether the school work is efficient, is what it should be, then I think you should go to an outside examiner, or board of examiners. You must allow your examiner to have a standard to form his judgment by; and to ensure that this standard is the right one, you should require him to be a good teacher, of sufficiently wide and varied experience in teaching as well as in examining.

This being my view, you will not be surprised at my requiring the examiner in English Literature—as in every other case—to look into and think over the poem or play on which he is going to set a paper, just as if he were going to use it in teaching; to make clear to himself what are the demands which the poem makes on the reader, and how far the average pupil of the age in question should be able to meet them, with the right kind of help; to consider the poem under the several heads of *subject-matter*, *text*, *paraphrasing*, and the rest, and to decide on the actual and *relative* importance of these in the particular poem, and for pupils of the particular age; to select his passages and his questions accordingly, adding certain alternatives of equal value if the subject be a long one, or he may sometimes make a few questions compulsory for all, and the rest alter

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native.[1] He should, of course, bear in mind the time allowed, and wholly abstain from questions which would merely display his own ingenuity and learning. I think that in the case of older examinees he should always take into account—at any rate, in his report—the language and general intelligence of the answers. Just as the various writers differ from one another, so will the importance to be given to particular points differ. You can hardly deal with Milton's *Paradise Lost* without touching upon similes or paraphrase; or with a poem of Tennyson or Keats without referring to the epithets. In Shelley, the subject-matter will not perhaps be so important as the metaphors and the use of language as an instrument of feeling: while, on the other hand, in Wordsworth the ideas and feelings of the poet may often be more valuable than the language itself. In Shakspere all the points are important—characters most of all; so you must mainly decide what to ask by your knowledge of the average pupil of the given age.

But enough about examinations. My theme is *literature-teaching*; and if you accept my view as to the qualifications of an examiner, you will not find it difficult to make the remaining deductions for yourselves.

[1] Alternative questions are really necessary in the case of a long subject, but are sometimes rather troublesome to set. I think they should always so be framed that *for the purpose in hand* they carry *equal* marks. Also, if several examiners mark the answers to the same question paper, then the marks to be assigned to each question should be decided on beforehand, or the standard will vary considerably.

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APPENDIX A

(1)

[*From a paper on "The Constructive Imagination," read before the Education Society, April 20th, 1885, and published in the "*JOURNAL OF EDUCATION*" in the July number of that year.*]

The materials, whether old or new, out of which we are to construct, must first be remembered, or freshly mastered and understood, and the work adapted to the powers of the child. It is not necessary, I think, to point out the great advantage it will be to the construction, the great aid it will be in constructing, if, when possible, the materials to be used are placed before the constructors, either in bodily form, or in simple and clear drawings or paintings, and thus kept vividly present to the mind all through the work of construction. What a help good portraits and pictures of places are to us in imagining historical scenes! How our illustrated papers help us to form mental images of what has been passing in far-off places! How much easier it is for us to realise the life of the past when standing in an ancient hall set about with ancient things! Again, the presentation or clear representation of a *rough model* of the compesition we are about to attempt, will be of great aid to us. So the events and manners of school life will often enable a child to form a better picture of life outside the school and in times past; the physical features of the country around him, or a carefully prepared clay model, will help him to realise the appearance of another country, roughly similar to the one or the other; the cat on the hearth-rug will make it easier for him to see a tiger in his mind's eye. Lastly, the construction itself must be, or must be rendered, interesting and attractive as well as within the child's power; that is, we must call in the aid of the will and of the emotional

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part of the child's nature—taking care, however, to keep the latter in the position of an *auxiliary*, for too great emotional excitement always prevents our seeing anything clearly, and *clear seeing* is just now our special object. I might add further cautions—such as not allowing the materials or the models to dwarf, in importance or in interest, the construction which is to be the result of our work; that both materials and models should be properly suited to produce the particular construction we want, and not likely to give rise to other constructions which we do not want; and much else relating to the rules of art. But I think I have said enough; and will now turn to the bearing of all this on

English Literature.

To make my advice as definite as possible, I shall choose a particular poem to speak about—a short and fairly simple one. Let it be "Home they brought her warrior dead!" The first step is, of course, to make clear to *ourselves* the picture which we wish our class to construct, *i.e.* to thoroughly master the poem. The next step is to examine the materials which the poet uses, and to decide which of these the children already possess, which they must now be given, and how this is to be done. Of these materials, some will be themselves pictures, oftenest in the form of metaphors and similes; some will be associations called up in various ways; some will be direct statements. Those which the class already know must be recalled to their remembrance; those which they do not yet know must be made known to them. What is the picture in the poem we have chosen? It is the picture of the effect of a sudden and great sorrow, and of the efforts made to relieve it—the only successful effort being the call to *duty*—duty *to others*—and the thought of the future. Nothing in the thought of the past, nothing in the terrible present can avail—nothing except the sense of duty, and the recalling to the mind that there is a future which still lies before. The scene is laid in an ancient castle in picturesque mediæval times, when "the

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ways were filled with rapine, and here and there a deed of prowess done redressed a random wrong." The gentle sweet-voiced melody of the words prevents our feeling too keenly the pain of what is set before us; and on this pain we must be careful not to dwell too much. The class will know something of the probable appearance of an ancient castle;—for London children the Tower of London and Windsor Castle will prove of great help. We will recall to their minds especially the spacious entrance-hall hung with trophies of war and of the chase. Of mediæval life they will know a vague something from their history work. We will render this slightly more definite, and will brighten it by comparing the security of modern times with the insecurity of the past—noting by the way that maidens then, for their education in manners and household duties, used to gather round the lady of the castle. For the emotional part we need merely remind them how much more trying a great grief is when we are expecting a great joy, and what a relief it is to all of us to "give sorrow words." All this should have been thought over and decided upon before ever we enter the class-room. Then when we do begin our work with the class, the old knowledge should be re-called and the fresh knowledge given as rapidly and shortly as is possible, consistently with our purpose of definiteness. In order to strike the right key-note, we may then proceed somewhat in this way. The young lord of the castle has been married but a short time to a young wife, who loves him dearly; he has already won himself a name by his kindness and faithfulness to his friends, and his noble forbearance to his enemies; many a time has he ridden forth with his followers to put right what was wrong, and to defend the weak, returning after victory to tell his admiring wife of his trials and his exploits. Now he is out on some such expedition, and to-day he is expected to return; the warder from his tower gives notice that a body of men is approaching bearing the banner of his lord; the young wife, with her maidens trooping after her, hurries into the hall to welcome him; even the old nurse follows with the baby in her

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arms; but the men enter in silence, bearing something on their shoulders—their young lord—dead. "Home they brought her warrior dead!" We proceed with the poem, reading it as simply and as impressively as we can. This done, we must return and question out the metaphors and similes and hard words; noting also the associations, such as *grace and gentleness* with the term "maiden," *venerableness and kindly wisdom* with the "ninety years" of the nurse. But all this I need not trouble you with. We shall end by calling on the class to read the poem to us.

But this is too emotional, some one will object. Well, then, let us choose something less emotional and less sad. Only do not let us think that we can train the *imagination* without also exercising the *emotions*, and other so-called faculties as well. The mind is one whole, and must be treated as one whole whenever we are trying to stir it into any particular mode of activity.

(2.)

[*From a paper on "The Æsthetic Sentiment," read before the Teachers' Guild, June 27th, 1887, and published in the "*JOURNAL OF EDUCATION*" in the September number of that year.*]

As we are now dealing with emotion, I will point out again the immense importance of the short introduction which is to strike the right key-note for our lessons in Literature. If the poem be short, and capable of being finished in one lesson, then only one such introduction will be necessary. But if it be too long for one lesson, then each lesson should begin with something of the kind, both retrospective and prospective. Let me try to indicate what I would say when beginning Blake's beautiful little poem, "A Dream." You will remember that it is about a tiny emmet that had lost its way, and the key-note is the feeling of fellowship—*kinship*—with this little being, and the omnipresent watchfulness and kindliness of

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Providence. We might start by asking the children if, when lying on the grass in summer, they had ever put their faces down amongst the grass-stems and mosses, and watched the wonderful little beings there all busily at work, or perhaps at play, in the tiny tangled forest, moving hither and thither, intent on doing something, and knowing what they are about. There is a little beetle scratching in the mould; there, a tiny spider making itself a web; and there, an ant carrying its load of food to the ant-hill yonder in the hedge. What a distance it has to go, and what a forest it has to get through! Why, the trees must be as tall to it as St. Paul's Cathedral is to you; and how hard the road must be to find; and what dangers it may meet! That spider, which seems so little to you, must seem to it bigger than an elephant would to a man—fancy a spider bigger than an elephant!—and that little worm, wriggling along, is a huge serpent twenty times as big round as the little ant itself. But the ant goes bravely along, carrying food to its little ones. And what beautiful things it will see on its way! Look more closely at the moss and tiny weeds—or take your magnifying-glass and look—their colours and their shapes, and the wee flowers are as beautiful as the bigger ones growing in your garden. See, there is another ant—coming from the nest—and they meet and put their heads together as if they were talking. Perhaps our little ant is asking how its children are getting on, and whether its husband has got home yet. What wonderful lives these little things lead—working and playing, and having their troubles, and helping one another like you and me—and all watched over, taken care of, and loved by the great God who made and loves us all. I have a little story here about an ant or emmet that lost its way, and was in great trouble when the night came on. Would you like to hear it? Listen:

"Once a dream did weave a shade
O'er my angel-guarded bed,
That an emmet lost its way
Where on grass methought I lay."

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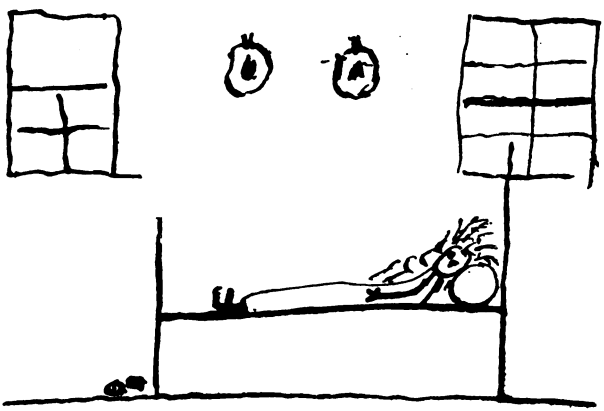
And so I proceed to the end—reading the poem as effectively as I can. I would not have you think that I offer this introduction as a model. I give it you merely as a very rough example of what might be done in preparing children for the poem. No mere dull reproduction of it would help any one. The feeling and manner with which it, or any other, is given are almost everything in work of this kind. And much also will depend on our skilfully drawing out from the children, and weaving into our talk, little events and scraps of knowledge familiar to these particular children and bearing on the matter in hand.

APPENDIX B.

A Specimen of "Graphic Representation," or "Picture Paraphrasing."



I give the above as a fairly ordinary specimen of "graphic representation" by a child. We had been reading *The*

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Sleeping Beauty, and had agreed that each of us should choose a scene and represent it on paper. Many chose what they could represent only very confusedly. Maggie, a simpler-minded little maiden aged seven, sent in the above. [Please note the hair—the story had made much of it; and the two feet; and the two eyes—though I *think* the face is in profile.] Later the following conversation took place.

"Yes, I see, Maggie, you have put in two windows; but there are no bars in the top of one."

"Coz it 's open, 'course."

[I saw I must be careful. Those two black spots at the foot of the bed—what could they be? Black-beetles? Probably not; Maggie did not like black-beetles, and she did like the Princess. Pointing to them I continued—]

"And these—what are these, Maggie?"

"The Pincess's shoes—coz, she 's lying on the bed."

[Evidently a reminiscence of something nurse must have said. I felt I was stupid; and evidently Maggie thought so too. But there were those things on the wall to ask about. So, like Abou Ben Adhem, I spoke more low but cheerly still—]

"What are these?"

"Pictures."

"Pictures of . . . of . . . of what?"

[Maggie's face was wonderful—touched with baby scorn, yet trying to be kind.]

"The Pincess's Papa and Mamma, 'course."

Yes, I knew I had been stupid. But Maggie forgave me; for, after all, I was, alas, only a "grown-up." I think, however, you will agree with me that Maggie had pictured out the scene very clearly in her mind.

My friend Mr. E. Cooke, of the Froebel Society, who uses Literature to increase the interest and animation of his drawing lessons, could tell many another tale like this, and has some hundreds of examples of childish "representation" stored up. He supplies the third and fourth of those which follow.

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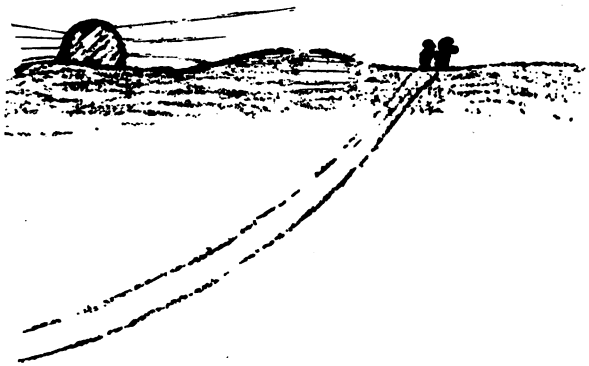
Of course with older pupils the representation grows more and more elaborate and artistic, but no whit less interesting—especially when, as it will do at times, it reveals curious misconceptions, and lack of attention to the details given in the poem itself, even when the poem has been learnt by heart. The great thing to remember is that, though we do as a matter of fact promote art-feeling and art-expression by exercises of this kind, we do not make artistic drawing a *sine qud non*, nor is art here our *chief* object. What we want is picture-paraphrasing—the translation of what the words tell our pupils into pictures of some kind; the translation of *word*-speech into *picture*-speech, however clumsy the pictures may be.

FURTHER SPECIMENS OF "GRAPHIC REPRESENTATION."

[Tennyson's version of *The Sleeping Beauty.*]



THE PRINCE AND THE PRINCESS DISAPPEARING FROM VIEW OVER THE PURPLE RIM OF THE WORLD. (A boy aged 12.)

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THE PRINCE KNEELING DOWN BY THE PRINCESS. (A boy aged 14.)

THE SLEEPING BEAUTY. (A girl aged 14.)
(*Reduced in size.*)

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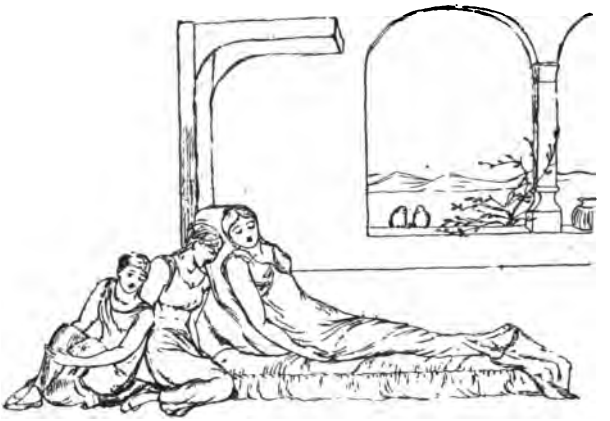

THE SLEEPING BEAUTY. (A girl aged 17.)
(*Reduced in size.*)

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